



CaliberMind

MARKETING MEANS BUSINESS: A TRILOGY

A three-part reflection on shaping the marketing value narrative
to win the boardroom, tame the algorithm, and own the bottom line

PART 2:

MARKETING AT
THE CENTER OF AI

“IF I HEAR ONE MORE THING ABOUT AI, I’M GONNA ...”

Maybe you rolled your eyes and exhaled sharply as soon as you saw this chapter heading.

But don’t go anywhere just yet.

We promise we won’t serve you another jug of Kool-Aid.

(We, too, prefer to keep working with AI, rather than keep hearing about it from yet another ‘thought leader’.)

Our goal, instead, is to be a voice of reason. It’s to rally around you as a fellow marketing leader who finds themselves at the center of AI.

What do we mean by marketing “in the center of AI”?

It means as a marketing leader you’re on center stage.

It means your organization is looking to you to pioneer AI initiatives.

It means all eyes are on you in hopes that you’ll bring results that benefit the business, not just your department.

If you’ve sensed this strangely optimistic pressure around you, there’s a reason.

According to Peter Isaacson, CMO at Invoca, “The CMO is typically leading the charge on AI implementation around a company. And that’s a sign of the relative importance of Marketing transitioning from being viewed as a cost center to being an advocate for change and transformation within a company.”¹

Forrester also reported that “**30% of CMOs in the US** are directly leading their marketing organizations’ AI efforts.”²

Similarly, Gartner concluded that “nearly 70% of enterprise marketers are ... outpacing other business functions” on AI, but “despite being early adopters, CMOs still struggle to identify business value beyond obvious use cases like operational efficiency.”³

This is why it’s critical for us as marketing leaders to develop a sound voice around AI, shape a strategic story, and own the stage.

¹ CMO Alliance, CMO Convo [podcast], “Achieving MAXIMUM Growth With AI,”

<https://www.cmoalliance.com/leveraging-ai-for-maximum-alignment-with-peter-isaacson-at-invoca/>

² Forrester, “AI Fluency Is the CMO’s Next Big Superpower,” June 3, 2024, <https://www.forrester.com/blogs/ai-fluency-is-the-cmos-next-big-superpower/>

³ Gartner, “How CMOs Can Develop an AI Strategy for Marketing,”

<https://www.gartner.com/en/webinar/754498/1707897-how-to-develop-an-ai-strategy-for-marketing>

THE PROBLEM

YOU'RE STILL WAITING FOR AI TO KNOCK YOUR SOCKS OFF

Gartner may call it a Hype Cycle. But on a human level, it feels more like an emotional rollercoaster. (OK, maybe we're being dramatic.)

Either way, when it comes to AI, we've all felt the gamut of emotions: anticipation, excitement, and surprise on the one hand; apprehension, intimidation, and uncertainty on the other.

AI has been sold to us as a *deus ex machina* that'll magically appear from above the stage and save the day. Like the almighty "Claw" in *Toy Story 3*, where the aliens rescue Woody and his friends from impending doom in the landfill incinerator.



Newsfeeds blast us with headlines. CEOs sycophantically echo Sam Altman's last interview appearance. LinkedIn is full of AI bros, n8n workflows, and AI agent "org charts" that sound like they've cured cancer.

But as we at CaliberMind look past all the theatrics that surround us, we see YOU in the background — head down, after hours, quietly doing the real work.

You walked into the world of AI with an open mind and ready hands.

You've dabbled with various LLMs and compared results.

You've trialed your martech vendors' AI assistants.

You started baking AI into your workflows.

And even though you've run into some disappointments, you have some early wins you're proud of.

But one truth remains: in reality, AI hasn't quite lived up to the hype. At least not yet.

How much of the following strikes a chord with you?

» Every tool in your stack released its own AI bot. But none of them talk to each other across your stack.

» Custom GPTs are impressive. But they're tricky when it comes to collaboration. (Not to mention, sometimes they break.)

» Some of your processes may run on autopilot. But they often need human intervention.

» Your AI use cases save you time. But all that QA-ing swallows the time you thought you saved. (**Our good friend James Tibert** — Salesforce Solutions Manager at gov-tech company Paylt — aptly calls it “the verification tax.”)



» You fired an agency because your team now uses AI to create content and brand creative in-house — relieving some of your budget. But it comes at a new cost: quality control around hallucinations, extra effort to stay original and on-brand, and greater difficulty winning mindshare in a market flooded with more content than ever.

So even though you're making progress, it feels like you've got one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake. It's just not an efficient way to move forward.

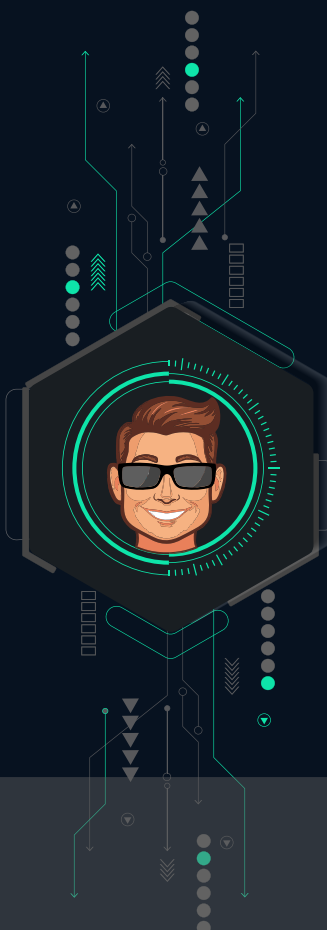
On top of that, you see other marketing leaders sharing win after win in CMO Slack communities.

So when AI seems to deliver for others but falls short for you, self-doubt creeps in:

- *What am I missing?*
- *Am I behind where my peers are?*
- *How do I continue to stay relevant in my field?*
- *Am I getting the ROI from AI — how can I measure it?*
- *What are my stakeholders really thinking about our rate of adoption?*

And that's just it.





Marketing leaders often project confidence while privately grappling with:

Pressure — not just from the industry and from stakeholders, but from inside themselves!

Mixed results using trial and error — along with endless iteration

Change management — which only adds to their already full plate

No wonder UserGems titled their AI adoption report “We Asked 100 Revenue Leaders About AI. *Here’s What They’re Not Telling You.*”⁵ (The subtitle implies that many revenue marketers aren’t being brutally honest with their peers.)

We’re seeing subtle hints of cognitive dissonance all around us.

Christy Uher Ferguson, Distinguished VP Analyst at Gartner, says:

“Typically CMOs [say] ‘I feel like I’m way behind because I think my peers are saving all this money on talent.’ With AI, we’re not seeing that at all. So you’re not behind if you think that. Don’t think that. You’re right where you should be.”⁶

Tara Robertson, CMO at Bitly, says:

“I don’t think there’s one person that I’ve talked to ... that doesn’t feel some form of imposter syndrome when it comes to AI. None of us know what we’re doing. We’re all in this and learning together in various beads. ... Because everyone’s doing something a little bit differently, but no one’s got it right. No one knows this playbook. There isn’t a playbook.”⁷

Along that same vein, Benchmarkit found that “only 10% of marketers self-report ‘very advanced’ AI maturity.”⁸

You get the point.

So why is there such a disconnect between expectation and reality?

And what can you do to navigate this AI race and reach your goal, one objective at a time?

⁵ Usergems, “We Asked 100 Revenue Leaders About AI. Here’s What They’re Not Telling You,” <https://www.usergems.com/guides/state-of-ai-adoption>

⁶ Gartner, “Gartner 2025 Tech Marketing Benchmarks: How Tech CMOs Can Navigate Uncertainty,” <https://webinar.gartner.com/723349/agenda/session/1623873?login=ML>

⁷ Exit Five, “Marketing in the Age of AI: CMOs Separating the Hype From What’s Real,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvgqLaLCdbg>

⁸ Benchmarkit, The State of AI in Marketing 2025, <https://www.benchmarkit.ai/widget/state-of-ai-in-marketing/cy-25>

WHY IT'S HAPPENING

FROM HYPE TO HANGOVER

If many of your AI implementations so far have yielded moderate or underwhelming results, don't fret.

No one is truly crushing it. The very fact that you're experimenting is a sign you're on the right track.

One of the most important things you need to do (and keep doing) is filter out the noise and stop comparing yourself to others.

BIG TECH TALKS A BIG GAME

Right now billion-dollar incentives are the main voice shaping the public AI story. In other words, we're all bombarded by dogmatic takes with ties to financial interests.

In fact, discerning journalists have begun raising awareness about the skewed narrative around AI.

A multi-national research team called Shaping AI found that "news media closely reflects business and government interests in AI by praising its future capabilities and under-reporting the power dynamics behind these interests." They uncovered a pattern:

How much of the following strikes a chord with you?

"Tech journalists tend to interview the same pro-AI experts over and over again — especially computer scientists. As one journalist explained to us: 'Who is the best person to talk about AI, other than the one who is actually making it?' When a small number of sources informs reporting, news stories are more likely to miss important pieces of information or be biased."⁹

Your news headlines disproportionately reflect the dreams of AI company CEOs, ignoring what the rest of us are experiencing in our workplaces.

Simply put, the stage is overrun by visionaries, not today's practitioners.

Of course, many of these visions may come true. (Look at how far we've come since 2023!) So it's OK to be inspired, motivated, and challenged to grow in this area.

At the same time, allow yourself to stay grounded in the present — and don't be too hard on yourself if your AI solutions aren't as "seamless" as that AI-founder keynote at the last martech conference promised you.

⁹ The Conversation, "News Coverage of Artificial Intelligence Reflects Business and Government Hype — Not Critical Voices," <https://theconversation.com/news-coverage-of-artificial-intelligence-reflects-business-and-government-hype-not-critical-voices-203633>

YOU'RE ONLY SEEING THE HIGHLIGHT REEL

Social media is filled with influencers who curate their most positive moments. Those Instagram grids don't tell the full story, leaving the audience with just the highlight reel.

Professionals showing up online to talk about AI are no different. A marketer shares a win — like how they built a custom GPT, vibe-coded a simple app, or created a workflow of AI agents to automate a task.

Everyone high-fives the marketer.

But when the output quality of that custom GPT mysteriously degrades or that app stops working or that AI agent breaks, often that same marketer doesn't share that part of the story. Maybe they feel embarrassed or maybe they just forget. Regardless, you're left with just the highlights, not the ups and downs that came before and after.

LinkedIn is even worse. Content creators share hacks, templates, and tricks, without giving you enough context. **For all you know, it's like a blind squirrel that found a nut. That moment of "success" isn't always something you can replicate or apply to your organization.**

Large organizations aren't built on hot takes and vibes.

In fact, company size is an important variable to consider. AI projects at a startup often don't teach you much about what's possible or doable at a bigger, more mature corporation.

THE BIGGER YOUR COMPANY. THE BIGGER THE CHALLENGE

Your friendly neighborhood billionaire AI CEO loves to talk about AI's potential. But what they're not telling you is how hard it is to reach that potential as an enterprise.

If you're at a mid-market or enterprise organization, you already know the AI journey looks very different compared to a startup.



For smaller companies, “experimenting with AI” might mean the marketing manager test-drives a new workflow on Monday, demos it to their three-person team on Tuesday, and rolls it out to production by Friday. The stakes are lower, there’s no red tape, and adoption is easy because the headcount is small.

At larger organizations, it’s not so simple. The scale and scrutiny that come with enterprise marketing make AI experimentation exponentially harder:

Your data lives in silos.

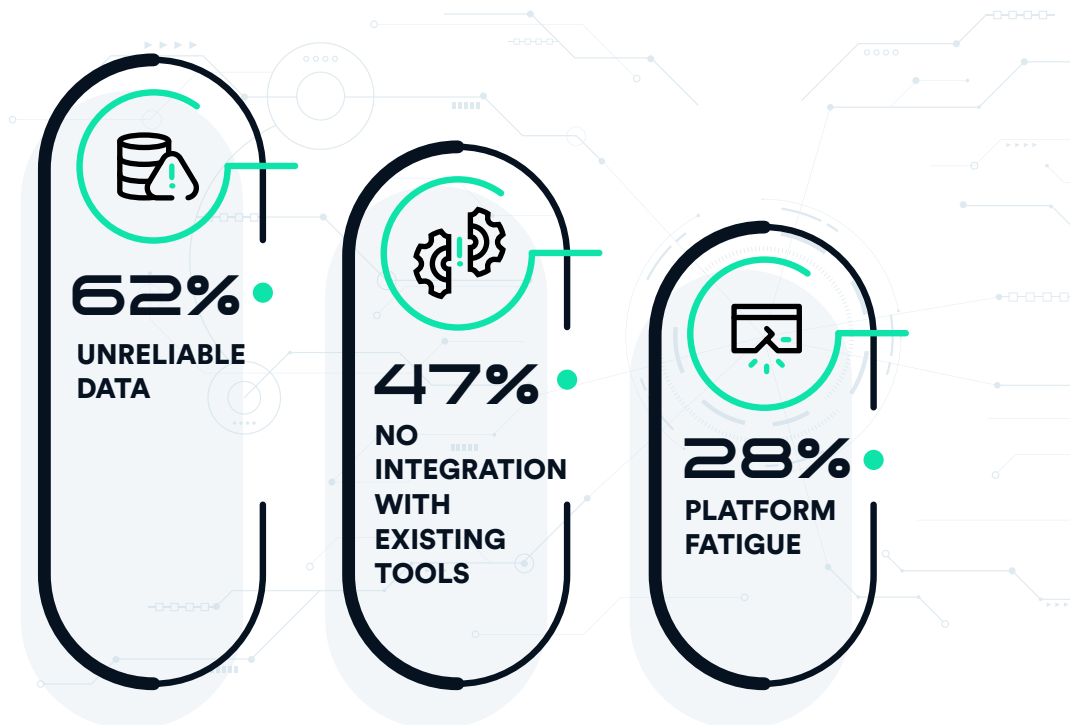
Nadia Davis, our VP of Marketing at CaliberMind, says, **“The more data you have, the more data complexities you have, the more silos you have.”**¹⁰

The UserGems study found this to be true as well, saying, “Integration and data quality are the real barriers.” In fact:

“62% of teams struggle with unreliable data, 47% can't connect AI to their existing tools, and 28% are exhausted from jumping between multiple platforms. Unless an AI tool integrates properly, adoption stays limited.”¹¹

At CaliberMind, we serve some large enterprises, and our team of data scientists and marketing analysts see (and solve) these challenges first-hand.

AI ADOPTION HURDLES



¹⁰ RevOps Co-op, “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” <https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>

¹¹ UserGems, “We Asked 100 Revenue Leaders About AI. Here’s What They’re Not Telling You,” <https://www.usergems.com/guides/state-of-ai-adoption>

➡ Dirty data is polluting your AI.

All that siloed messy data we just mentioned ultimately leads to bad data being fed into AI. That's because it lacks structure and consistency.

James Tibert shares a relatable example in “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”:

“AI cannot make sense of your business if your CRM treats ‘United States,’ ‘USA,’ and ‘US’ as three different countries.”

Tibert says that for AI to be usable in marketing analytics, **“data hygiene and accuracy are the foundation”** and an **“absolute non-negotiable first step with your data.”**¹²

On a Humans of Martech episode, Tiankai Feng (data analytics thought leader and author of Humanizing Data Strategy), couldn't have said it better: **“AI with bad data is just bad AI.”**

Feng points out that before AI, **“data quality was not sexy.”** Everyone knew it was important, **“but no one wanted to take care of it.”** Now that AI is a huge priority, Feng says, **“All of a sudden the focus is much bigger. [People are realizing] ‘Data quality is hindering all of our innovation here. And if we cannot compete with the rest of the world in AI, then what are we doing?’ And that puts a lot of pressure on it.”**¹³

So without a doubt, data that hasn't been cleaned and prepped to be used by AI is a huge reason many companies aren't yet experiencing the full potential of AI.

¹² RevOps Co-op, “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,”

<https://www.revopscop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>

¹³ Humans of Martech, Ep. 179, “Tiankai Feng: The Comeback of Data Quality and how NLP Is Changing the Data Analyst Role,”

<https://humansofmartech.com/2025/07/22/179-tiankai-feng-the-comeback-of-data-quality-and-how-data-analyst-roles-are-changing/>

➡ Training your team can be tough.

It's not enough for one CMO or VP to believe in a use case. You need buy-in from entire departments and teams. That means longer lead times and slower adoption.

As Joe Schattschneider, Director of Data Strategy at CaliberMind, says:

"If [AI] doesn't become ingrained as part of your processes, if people aren't trained on it, it's not going to work. So 95% of orgs probably threw AI out there ... and hoped it would magically fix everything."¹⁴

Yup, there's Toy Story's "The Claw" again.

The challenge of getting team buy-in, standardizing how individuals work with AI, and making use cases stick is magnified in larger companies due to the sheer size of those teams.



➡ Security and compliance slow things down.

Enterprise legal teams are cautious, and rightfully so. One misstep can jeopardize decades of trust.

Enterprise marketers know better than to put blind trust in a vibe-coding app (or at least we hope so!). Protecting data is like protecting your crown jewels.

James Tibert said at the RevOps Co-op "AI for Marketing Analytics" webinar:

"[The Tea app data leak] is really the cautionary tale of our time. ... You see these hundred million dollar valuations that are built on 'vibes,' and it makes for a great headline. But, you know, without the guardrails of a security data governance process, that same speed-to-market can just lead you right off a cliff."

¹⁴ RevOps Co-op, "AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," <https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>

Governance has gravity.

Enterprise marketing leaders can't operate like it's the wild west. You can't just "move fast and break things" the way startup marketers do.

Enterprise teams have to document use cases, evaluate risk, test rigorously, and prove accuracy and reliability before AI workflows are rolled out at scale. Naturally, that means AI will be a slower but higher-visibility experiment at your company. And that's OK.

Benchmarkit discovered:

"Just 46% [of companies] have documented AI policies, with larger companies (56%) leading in formal governance. Smaller organizations (33%) are slower to document AI policies. Clear, standardized AI policies are essential to accelerating adoption and ensuring effective, compliant AI use across teams."¹⁵

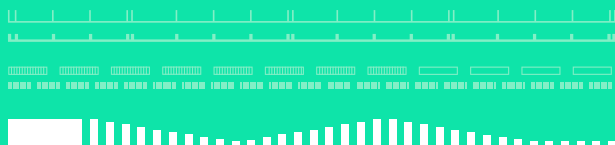
Similarly, Gartner gives a very direct message about this in one of their papers:

"In this new era of human-machine interaction, there will be many unforeseen consequences. Governments are working to set regulations for using AI, but regulation typically lags technology progress and CIOs cannot wait for regulations to define the boundaries for using AI."¹⁶

So your number 1 goal is not to fast-track at all costs, but to take a responsible eyes-wide-open approach.

Conclusion

If we were to give you a TL;DR on this, it would come straight out of the mouth of AI strategist, product leader, and author Nate B. Jones in one of his discerning reflections:



"Most of the issues we're seeing today with AI are human and organizational problems, not AI problems. And so when the model makers make these big claims about how incredible their new models are, I always filter them back through the actual organizational realities."¹⁷

¹⁵ Benchmarkit, The State of AI in Marketing 2025, <https://www.benchmarkit.ai/widget/state-of-ai-in-marketing/cy-25>

¹⁶ Gartner, "Get AI Ready: What IT Leaders Need to Know," <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/ai-readiness>

¹⁷ Nate B. Jones, "ChatGPT 5 Won't Save You: 10 Reasons Why Your AI Strategy Is Failing," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sf_OYY9IMlw

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

A FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING AI WORK IN MARKETING

To help you tune out the noise and sharpen your focus, we've created a mnemonic framework for making progress with AI.

Introducing **TASK**

The TASK framework gives you a practical way to evaluate and prioritize AI initiatives within marketing — responsibly.

T – Target repeatable work

In 2023, CEOs and CFOs instantly looked to marketers to lean into generative AI, because getting “communicators” to use large language models (LLMs) just made sense. After all, for many B2Bs, content was a speed-and-volume game, especially before AI disrupted Search. Taking advantage of AI meant generating creative content at scale and freeing up agency spend.

However, we agree with Benchmarkit when they say that leading marketing teams are “**expanding AI's role beyond content creation to include advanced applications like workflow integration, decision automation, and hyper-personalization.**”¹⁸

Our very own Nadia Davis explains:

“Content creation is one of those most repeatable tasks, most ungrateful tasks with the shortest shelf life. It's a ‘wash, rinse, repeat’ cycle. The amount of effort you invest is so high. That's why content became the first thing people outsourced — and now the first thing they automate.

But what if you took the same concept and applied it to other areas of marketing that are less obvious and less intuitive — like the world of data and reporting? Because similar to content marketers, your marketing operations people feel like they have to do the same thing over and over again. They continuously create the same types of reports.”



¹⁸ Benchmarkit, The State of AI in Marketing 2025, <https://www.benchmarkit.ai/widget/state-of-ai-in-marketing/cy-25>

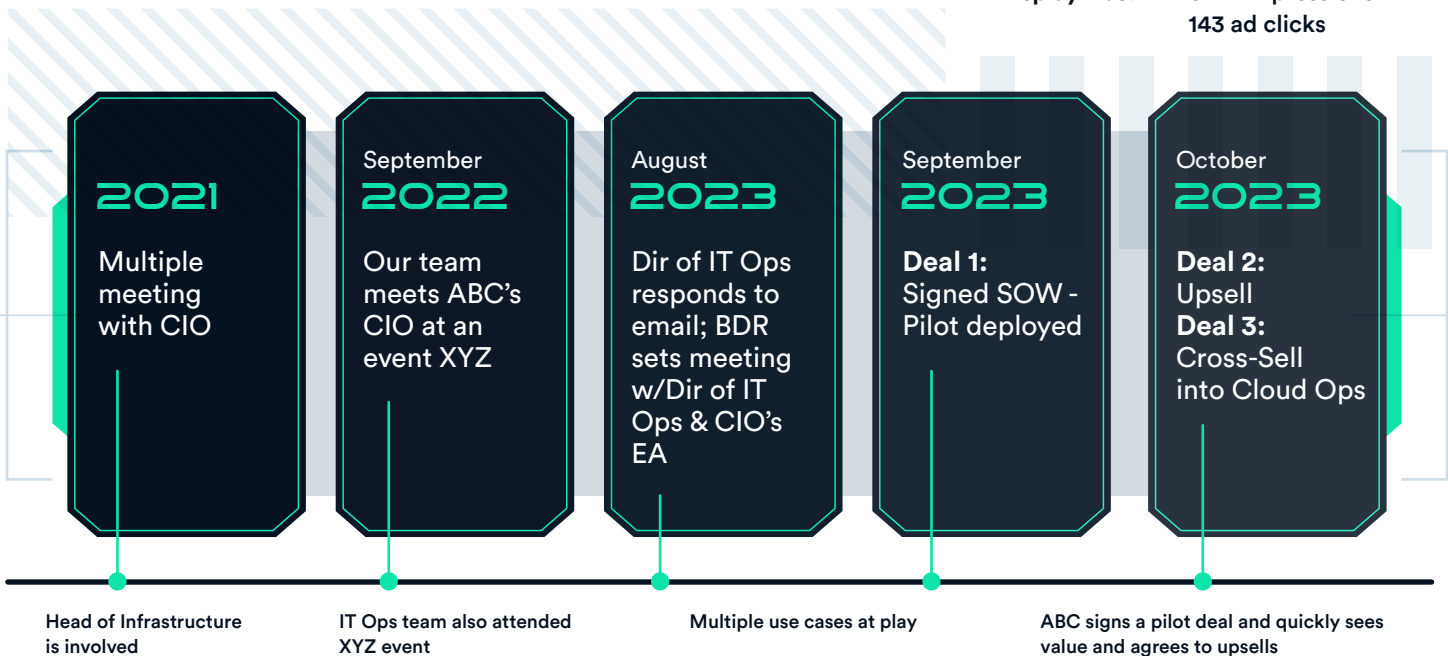
Start with routine work everyone silently dreads — the repetitive, high-volume, low-glory tasks that soak up hours. Think: pulling reports, formatting dashboards, summarizing data points on a dashboard with an explanation of how they relate to each other and the why behind it.

Joe Schatschneider shares a simple rule-of-thumb he calls “the intern test”:

“I like to use what I call ‘the intern test.’ If it’s something you would teach your intern to do, it could be a good exercise for AI.”¹⁹

At CaliberMind, we put this principle to work by asking: where could AI relieve our own team’s most repetitive, time-consuming tasks? One clear opportunity emerged in our ABM programs. In the past, ABM marketers would build a buyer’s journey manually to show their sales team what a Marketing Qualified Account did as they progressed through the marketing funnel — webinar touches, ad engagements, content downloads, as well as booth visits and BDR calls, etc. That meant spending hours aggregating data ahead of a QBR. The result looked something like this:

ABC Inc | Anatomy of the Buyer



¹⁹ RevOps Co-op, “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” <https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>

It didn't make sense to keep marketers busy poring over mountains of data. So our product team built Ask Cal, an AI assistant, to do the work in seconds. Ask Cal summarizes engagement data, assembles a complete account journey — including persona titles, additional engaged contacts, and account behavior across campaigns — and pushes it straight into Salesforce with suggested outreach advice. After rigorous testing and iteration, we rolled it out to our flagship customers. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and Ask Cal was born.



Today, Ask Cal doesn't just summarize account journeys. It can spot performance trends, pull broad or hyper-focused reports, set operational targets, and more. In other words, it takes the same rinse-and-repeat cycle we first saw in content creation and applies it to the repetitive (but critical) world of marketing analytics and reporting.

This brings us to another related point:

Targeting repeatable work often requires marketing leaders to choose between building in-house or investing in domain-specific AI tools.

As Benchmarkit points out, that part of your AI strategy will involve **“investing in domain-specific AI tools that offer deeper marketing- and brand-specific capabilities rather than relying on general-purpose AI.”**²⁰

However, regardless of which AIs you use and what use cases you're targeting, the quality of the data it's built on is more important than anything else we say in the rest of this framework (which is why we've devoted an entire last chapter to the topic of data).



²⁰ Benchmarkit, The State of AI in Marketing 2025, <https://www.benchmarkit.ai/widget/state-of-ai-in-marketing/cy-25>

A – Assess business alignment

This is the second aspect of TASK.

Just as Part 1 of this ebook talked about how important it is for targets, KPIs, and metrics to ladder up to business goals and objectives, you have to look at your AI strategy in a similar fashion.

With AI, it's easy to get distracted by new shiny toys. Sometimes we also get caught up copying what other companies are doing. (Because if they're going all in on something, they must know what they're doing. Right?)

Instead, your journey with AI should always have a “why” that ties back to meeting the goals of the business — even if AI is helping you with operational or tactical tasks.

Tiankai Feng says our decisions around AI have to be **“driven by Is that the right thing for our business?” We have to “root it back to what’s helping us to be successful in the business, not just what is exciting to do or what is quick to launch.”** Feng advocates for **“the whole mindset [to] shift more towards end-to-end thinking, value thinking, [and] design thinking.”**²¹

So even though AI is very much an open-ended, experiment-driven pursuit, you still have to keep your eye on the ball. Bringing AI into your process should always have a clear goal of helping you deliver something concrete for the business.



For example, let's say your ABM programs need to generate 25% of sales revenue. You can identify gaps or inefficiencies in your current ABM motion and explore how AI can help you close those gaps. That way, if your AI investment directly improves the success of ABM, it is — by default — tied to revenue outcomes. And it becomes much easier to tell that story to stakeholders.

AI feels like a blank canvas. That's why it's so important to have your own vision for a result you're trying to achieve, before pouring resources into your next experiment.

²¹ Humans of Martech, Ep. 179, “Tiankai Feng: The Comeback of Data Quality and how NLP Is Changing the Data Analyst Role,” <https://humansofmartech.com/2025/07/22/179-tiankai-feng-the-comeback-of-data-quality-and-how-data-analyst-roles-are-changing/>



S – Stress-test before you scale

One of the most unforgiving things about AI is that it can work marvelously today, and not know left from right tomorrow.

Of course, there could be a myriad of reasons for this: maybe your LLM just got an “upgrade,” maybe there’s a change to the data infrastructure underneath, or maybe your bot just woke up on the wrong side of the bed.

Or maybe ... the AI just wasn’t tested rigorously enough.

When we have a breakthrough with an AI use case, it can be tempting to celebrate early, call it a day, and give your team the green light. But that’s one of the pitfalls with AI.

Without trying to sound harsh, it’s like the difference between amateurs and professionals:

Amateurs practice until they get it right. Professionals practice until they can’t get it wrong.

The difference in quality, reliability, and consistency of the output is huge.

Nadia Davis likens it to building a product:

“You wouldn’t ship your MVP. If you did, you’d get less than one star on all the review sites. Because chances are somebody will find that marginal case where it doesn’t work. So wherever you decide to include AI and automation, you need to stress test the workflow against multiple scenarios and edge cases. That way you’ve worked out more of the kinks ahead of time.”

This brings us back to the topic of data (which we’ll cover in the next chapter).

To get the most out of AI, you first need to take care of your data. Because no matter how good the AI model is, you won’t be able to trust its results if you can’t trust the data you’re feeding it.

²⁰ Benchmarkit, The State of AI in Marketing 2025,
<https://www.benchmarkit.ai/widget/state-of-ai-in-marketing/cy-25>

There are four pillars to building an AI-ready data foundation:

1. **Foundation:** Data hygiene and accuracy
2. **Rulebook:** Data governance and stewardship
3. **Connections:** Data accessibility and integration
4. **Blueprint:** Logical data model and schema

4 Pillars to an AI-Ready Data Foundation



Now, this is in the context of using AI within marketing analytics — but you can apply these same principles to any AI use case or domain. Our friend James Tibert covers all four pillars in the “AI for marketing analytics” webinar.²²

TL;DR: Get your data is AI-ready. Sandbox your early experiments. Test as many edge cases as you can think of. Validate results against your data and with subject matter experts.



WATCH “AI FOR MARKETING ANALYTICS”

²² RevOps Co-op, “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” <https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>



K – Keep humans in the loop

The human role in AI deserves a whole book on its own. But we'll try to be as quick as possible here.

First, always remember, just because you can doesn't mean you should.

Not every task is worth AI-ifying. Not every task is worth automating.

Nate B. Jones provides some food for thought on where good old human intelligence “won't go out of style” in a world where AI walks around like it's the best thing since sliced bread (and maybe it is). He says:

- “Understanding how to broker trust never goes out of style. ... Trust is a human transaction.”
- “Understanding how to build trust in business contexts will never go out of style.”
- “Understanding how to work in high-context situations where you have to be aware of wide, rapidly changing contexts doesn't go out of style.”
- “Understanding how to handle high-ambiguity situations where things are gray and shifting all the time, those are not things AI is super good at either. ... So look for places with really messy real-world constraints.”²³

This brings us to something you need to keep in mind at all times when choosing where to implement AI:

» Will AI be your co-pilot? Or will AI be your autopilot?

The co-pilot dynamic is something we're all familiar with already. Even if we've gone to an LLM with high hopes, most of us have discovered that no matter how sophisticated the model, how much context we give it, or how detailed our prompt, the first output is rarely good enough to ship.

That's not a sign that you're a bad user of AI; it's a sign you're an expert at what you do.

Because you are the leader and subject matter expert, you can involve AI even in the high-trust situations Nate B. Jones talks about. (Like telling stories with data to stakeholders.)

- » You have the experience to be able to guide AI.
- » You have the discernment to evaluate its output.
- » You have the authority to blend AI assistance with your own brilliance — and you know when you need to override it entirely.

²³ Nate B. Jones, “Will AI Kill Your Job,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RZlxqMcObE&t=708s>

Carilu Dietrich, the CMO who took Atlassian public and now serves as a hypergrowth advisor, agrees:

“The more sophisticated you are in an area, the more effectively you can use AI to get good results in that area.”²⁴

You are the pilot because you know how to fly the plane and AI doesn’t. But you can use AI as your intern or your assistant.

James Tibert aptly points out that AI amplifies whoever is directing it:

“You have to understand that AI is really just a powerful amplifier. It’s like a megaphone. You give it to a brilliant strategist, ... and it amplifies the genius. On the counter side, ... if you give it to somebody who’s sloppy, it just amplifies the sloppiness across the entire organization.”²⁵

That means human talent has unmeasurable value. We have to be judicious about where and how to involve AI.

UserGems' AI adoption report asked 100 revenue leaders, 'What tasks should stay human?' It found that “nearly a third of leaders draw a hard line on creative work” because “AI-generated content all sounds the same” and “some leaders refuse to add to the noise.”²⁶ That’s not to say that those teams don’t use AI for creative marketing activities. They do. But they tend to use AI for first brainstorming, ideation, and first drafts, says the report.

OK, so what about AI on autopilot?

Surely, there are areas within marketing that can use some AI-driven automation. The autopilot-style AI deployments are best suited for extremely predictable, formulaic, transactional tasks that don’t require creativity and won’t directly impact your brand should something go wrong.

But if you’re building AI agents, definitely expect to QA, pay the verification tax, and fix stuff when it breaks (because it will).

The result should be that your team wins back the time and headspace for the gray areas that require intuition, experimentation, judgment, and creative leaps that no algorithm or AI model can currently replace.

²⁴ CMO Confidential, “B2B Marketing: The Year in Review + the Year Ahead,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTBa7ycku-4>

²⁵ RevOps Co-op, “AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” <https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly>

²⁶ Usergems, “We Asked 100 Revenue Leaders About AI. Here’s What They’re Not Telling You,” <https://www.usergems.com/guides/state-of-ai-adoption>

Putting TASK into practice

Applied consistently, the TASK framework does two things: it saves your team from chasing hype, and it reframes AI as a strategic lever instead of a shiny toy.

By targeting the right kind of work, aligning it to business goals, testing carefully before scaling, and keeping humans in the loop, you'll build trust. Both in the technology and in yourself as a leader who knows how to harness it.

The beauty of TASK is that it makes AI adoption less overwhelming. You don't need to boil the ocean. You just need to tackle the right tasks, one by one.

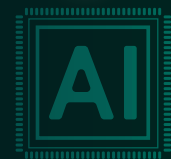


TO RECAP

AI isn't the silver bullet investors promised or the job-killing monster some feared. It's a set of tools that continue to evolve and that we get to shape. The unknowns around AI are both terrific and terrifying. People are running into multiple directions, and it's going to be long before anyone "arrives." So you're better off charting your own course than blindly following others. Your business context, your team's strengths and gaps, your buyers and customers — these are what should inform your AI strategy.

The marketing leaders who'll win with AI aren't those who tinker the loudest, but the systems-thinkers who stay grounded in reality, care about the business as a whole, and move forward as a cross-functional team. That's what the TASK framework is about: bringing intent, alignment, and humanity back to how we work; AI is simply part of that picture.

But you can't do any of that well without a clean, connected data foundation. In the next section, we'll look at how marketing can take the lead in building that foundation.





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MARKETING MEANS BUSINESS: A TRILOGY

A three-part reflection on shaping the marketing value narrative to win the boardroom, tame the algorithm, and own the bottom line



Read Chapter 3